

WASHINGTON, DC—On April 23, 2009, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) voted in favor of H.R. 1139, the COPS Improvement Act of 2009, which the House passed by a vote of 342 to 78. The bill calls for putting 50,000 additional police officers on the street over the next 5 years—authorizing \$1.25 billion a year for COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) hiring grants, \$350 million a year for COPS technology grants, and \$200 million a year for hiring community prosecutors. In Pennsylvania, approximately 1,500 new police officers are expected to be hired through this legislation.

“The COPS program has been a major asset to our communities since it was started in 1994,” said Congressman Sestak. “The program provides grants to state and local governments to hire additional law enforcement officers and prosecutors, and has helped to hire more than 117,000 officers. This measure also authorizes up to \$350 million a year for grants to departments to obtain or upgrade technology and equipment, and \$200 million per year to help hire community prosecutors. This is an example of an effective program that is helping keep our communities safe, and I am proud to offer my continued support.”

The bill is particularly needed because of the current economic challenges, which have led to cutbacks in state and local funding for law enforcement across the country. A recent survey of more than 200 police departments by the Police Executive Research Forum found that more than a quarter of law enforcement agencies reported implementing a hiring freeze for sworn officers and more than half have frozen civilian positions. Furthermore, a third of agencies said they have discontinued, reduced in size, or delayed classes for new police recruits.

COPS Improvements Act of 2009

The legislation would amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to expand the authority of the Attorney General to make grants for public safety and community policing programs (COPS ON THE BEAT grant program).

- Authorizes grants to: (1) hire school resource officers and establish local partnerships to combat crime, gangs, drug activities, and other problems in elementary and secondary schools; (2) establish and implement programs to reduce and prevent illegal drug activities, including the manufacturing, distribution, and use of methamphetamine; (3) establish criminal gang enforcement task forces; and (4) meet emerging law enforcement needs, as warranted.
- Authorizes the use of COPS ON THE BEAT grants to hire honorably discharged members of the Armed Forces to serve as career law enforcement officers.
- Authorizes the Attorney General to make grants for: (1) assigning prosecutors to handle cases from specific geographic areas and to address counter-terrorism problems and violent crime in local communities; and (2) developing new technologies to assist state and local law enforcement agencies in crime prevention and training.

- Grants the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services exclusive authority to perform functions and activities under COPS ON THE BEAT grant program.
- Authorizes the Attorney General to extend grant periods and to renew grants if the grant recipient can demonstrate significant progress in achieving the objectives of the initial grant application.
- Increases and extends the authorization of appropriations for the COPS ON THE BEAT grant program for FY2009-FY2014.
- Requires the Inspector General of the Department of Justice (DOJ) to report to Congress on the COPS ON THE BEAT grant program.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.